

AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

Basic Steps for ELCA Congregations to Observe the Sanctuary Memorial: What to do if someone approaches your congregation and asks for sanctuary

Now that the 2019 Churchwide Assembly has publicly declared the ELCA to be a sanctuary denomination, walking alongside immigrants and refugees is a matter of faith.

What does this mean for your congregation?

Every church within the ELCA must decide for itself what manner of engagement it can provide for immigrants in its community, and then be prepared to provide that support. All churches should be ready with information if someone comes to their door asking for sanctuary. That doesn't mean that each congregation will provide sanctuary, rather that it will know where appropriate connections are available in its community.

1. **Have a conversation about what it means to be a sanctuary congregation.** Being a sanctuary congregation is about loving our neighbors, but that will look different from one congregation to another, depending on the physical location and surrounding community. It can mean providing physical sanctuary — actually hosting migrants. But it can also mean walking with asylum-seekers in the community, teaching ESL classes, providing financial and legal support to those working through the immigration process, supporting other congregations that are involved in this work, or connecting with local agencies that provide support for immigrants. [ELCA.org/sanctuarychurch](https://www.elca.org/sanctuarychurch) offers resources to facilitate that conversation, but there are also many local resources.
2. **Once your congregation has learned about sanctuary, it must decide how it can most effectively support those who struggle with our broken immigration system.** This isn't a political issue — it's a matter of faith. Will the congregation join the ELCA network as a welcoming or sanctuary congregation? Information on this topic is available at [ELCA.org/AMMPARO](https://www.elca.org/AMMPARO).
3. **Every congregation needs to learn more about resources available in its area should someone show up on its doorstep seeking sanctuary.** Connect with [ELCA](https://www.elca.org), [AMMPARO](https://www.elca.org/AMMPARO), [Church World Services](https://www.elca.org/ChurchWorldServices) or your local sanctuary network to find contact information for sanctuary hosting congregations in your area. If your congregation wants

to become a sanctuary host or even create a sanctuary supporting network, further study will be needed on what that will require, in terms of facilities and support. Many churches are unable to do this, but they can still help by seeking out other churches or organizations in their area that offer sanctuary or by providing immigrants with a list of resources. A simple Google search can be a place to start.

4. **Learn how to connect to AMMPARO, the ELCA's strategy for supporting migrant minors and immigrant families.** The simplest way to do this is to become an [AMMPARO Welcoming Congregation](#). Church bodies can also become involved in AMMPARO's work in local immigration courts, as advocates for immigrant rights at the local, state and national level, and as financial supporters. AMMPARO volunteers accompany minors in immigration court proceedings, support congregations at the border, advocate for immigrants at the national level and work with churches and organizations in Central America to assist migrants deported from the United States and Mexico.
5. **All congregations are encouraged to advocate for just and humane treatment of migrant children and families as children of God.** The ELCA has stood firm on this issue for decades, seeking justice for those who have lived in the United States for many years. Congregations need to be vocal about their work and clear that it exemplifies our Christian faith.